

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5132

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As of February 1, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to funding the department of fish and wildlife.

**Brief Description:** Redirecting certain moneys for the benefit of department of fish and wildlife programs.

**Sponsors:** Senators Regala, Jacobsen, Swecker, Rockefeller, Spanel, Hatfield, Hargrove and Rasmussen.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 1/31/07.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

**Staff:** Kim Johnson (786-7346)

**Background:** The State Wildlife Account receives various revenues collected by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). These revenues include receipts from the sale of many licenses and tags, administrative penalties, compensation for damages, advertisement sales, and a game fish excise tax. Monies in the Wildlife Account are used primarily to support DFW activities.

Currently the revenue that is generated from the sale of annual resident saltwater licenses and all annual razor clam and shellfish licenses is dedicated to the general fund. Revenue from recreational license fees that is deposited into the general fund is required to be appropriated for the management, enhancement, research, and enforcement of DFW's programs that manage saltwater resources.

A Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group (RFEG) is a local, incorporated, non-profit organization relying primarily on volunteer efforts to enhance salmon resources and develop projects designed to aid the fishery enhancement capability of DFW. Fourteen such groups have been formed and recognized by DFW. The RFEG Account is an unappropriated account managed by DFW. Funds in the RFEG Account may only be used for projects sponsored by an RFEG.

The RFEG Account receives certain dedicated funding. The dedicated funding includes a \$100

surcharge on the sale of certain salmon licenses and all revenue from the sale of carcasses and eggs recovered from salmon that return to a hatchery run by an RFEG. In addition, the RFEG Account receives a portion of each recreational fishing license fee. The actual amount of each

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license fee dedicated to the RFEG Account is not provided in statute and is left to the discretion of the DFW. However, DFW must ensure that the portion of the license fee dedicated to the RFEG Account is set at a level that equals the level of participation in the fisheries benefitted from the enhancement programs.

**Summary of Bill:** Revenue collected by DFW from the sale of annual resident saltwater licenses and all annual razor clam and shellfish licenses is redirected from the general fund into the Wildlife Account.

The provision requiring recreational license fees to be used for DFW's saltwater resource management programs is repealed. Instead, revenue from these sources is redirected from the general fund and deposited into the Wildlife Account and may be used for any of the purposes authorized for Wildlife Account monies.

DFW's discretion to set the portion of a recreational fishing license fee directed to the RFEG Account is removed. Instead, the portion of the fee dedicated to the RFEG Account is established to be two dollars for each license sold to an individual intending to fish for salmon, steelhead, marine fish, or sturgeon.

DFW must rely on annual surveys to determine the percentage of recreational fishing license buyers who intend to fish for salmon, steelhead, marine fish, or sturgeon. The results of the survey must be used to determine how many of the total recreational fishing licenses sold qualify for the two dollar transfer into the RFEG Account.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This is the last of the license fee revenue that has not been redirected from the General Fund into the Wildlife Account. The Coalition of Coastal Fisheries supports the redirection of these fees to the Wildlife Account.

RFEG's need funding stabilization in order to be successful. This bill would double the amount of money distributed to the RFEG's. RFEG's provide public outreach, volunteer coordination and education with these dollars. We have thousands of people that come view salmon at our enhancement projects. Most important thing we do is meet with land owners to work together and make simple plans. This would greatly enhance the work that we do.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Regala, prime sponsor; Ron McQueen, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Joe Williams, South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group; Ed Owens, Coalition of Coastal Fisheries.